



FRONTIER DEFENSE IN THE CIVIL WAR: Texas' Rangers and Rebels by David Paul Smith

Review by: L. Boyd Finch

The Journal of Arizona History, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 207-208

Published by: [Arizona Historical Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41696010>

Accessed: 18/06/2014 00:24

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Arizona Historical Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Arizona History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Books

Grande and Westward the Texans: The Civil War Journal of Private William Randolph Howell. Readers will find a complete and useful bibliography in *Desert to Bayou*, which is clothbound in quarto (9 by 12 inches) format to accommodate the illustrations (forty-six in all). Historians well versed in the Civil War in the Southwest will want to add this volume to the half-dozen published journals of Rebels in New Mexico already in their libraries.

ANDREW E. MASICH
Colorado Historical Society

FRONTIER DEFENSE IN THE CIVIL WAR: Texas' Rangers and Rebels.
By David Paul Smith. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992. Maps, appendices, notes, biblio., index, 237 pages. ISBN 0-89096-484-X. \$39.50 (hard-cover).

HISTORIAN SMITH FACED A DIFFICULT TASK in researching the frontier troubles of Texas during the War Between the States. The late Walter Prescott Webb, whose scholarly adulation of the Texas Rangers became legend, declared that for 1861 to 1865, "it is practically impossible to follow the activities of the so-called Texas Rangers. If the story is ever told, it will be fragmentary, and will not reveal a single character distinguished for his deeds as a Ranger." Now the story is told. It is fragmentary in great part, and, yes, no single man stands out—but that is no severe criticism of Smith's effort, for within one cover he tells more than ever before published.

Smith's subtitle makes subtle use of an apostrophe: "Texas' Rangers," echoing Webb's "so-called Texas Rangers." The point is that no formal Texas Ranger organization existed at the time, although the tradition of "ranging companies" continued and frontier defenders often were popularly called rangers. The author had to deal with a variety of military units, some of them Confederate and some Texas state troops. Their geographic commands overlapped, and all were short of men, arms, and supplies.

Before the Civil War erupted, Smith notes, in Texas nearly one-fourth of the U.S. Army, plus rangers, had more than they could handle in defending settlers against Kiowas, Comanches, Mescalero Apaches, and Mexican freebooters. With the removal of the U.S. forces, the state government had to act quickly to find some stop-gap—the first being the new Texas Mounted Rifles. Too soon also, state officials discovered that the Confederate high command would

THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

spare little money or manpower to defend the frontier. Ironically, *within* the Confederacy, states' rights became an issue.

Smith focuses his work on a region of repeated Comanche attacks, what was then the northwestern frontier of the Lone Star State: the Red River Valley and from there south toward Dallas and thence west-southwest. He devotes less space to the rest of the Indian frontier (approximately north to south through the middle of today's Texas) and pays essentially no attention to the Rio Grande frontier with Mexico.

As the Civil War wore on and Southern morale declined—quite noticeably in northern Texas—a new source of violence added to the difficulties. Smith reveals that the military mission became more a policing operation: “As serious as was the constant Indian menace, the problem of deserters, draft dodgers, bushwhackers, and Jayhawkers eventually overshadowed even the Indian threat along much of the frontier.”

The book is strong in describing the strategy and organizational structure of frontier defense, despite the complications of the latter. But Smith offers little to dramatize the tragedies of the settlers who sought to hang on despite enough difficulties to try Job. And, unfortunately, the single distinguished character whose story might have tied together and dramatized the events did not materialize—or the author did not find that person.

Arizona cartographer Don Bufkin contributed his usual well-done maps. For us non-Texans, however, it would have helped if the author had directed that the maps include some reference to modern-day cities and towns, as well as more of the now-vanished Civil War-era places that appear in the text.

L. BOYD FINCH
Tucson

NEW MEXICO'S BUFFALO SOLDIERS, 1866-1900. By Monroe Lee Billington. Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1991. Intro., preface, maps, illus., notes, bibliographic essay, appendix, index, 257 pages. \$29.95 (hard-cover).

THE POST-CIVIL WAR army organized in 1866 included two regiments of black cavalry and four (later reduced to two) regiments of black infantry. Since most black units were stationed in the Southwest for most of the late nineteenth century, New Mexico was rarely without